



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Epiphany 5 – February 4, 2018: Twelfth Ordination Anniversary

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

I've been to the place where this happened. And over the years, the church has built a worship site over the spot. The church has a glass floor and you can look down into the house of Peter's mother-in-law. And beyond the altar you can see the Sea of Galilee.

For some reason that day, I was drawn not so much to the site of Peter's mother-in-law's house as I was to the shores of the Sea of Galilee itself. And as I stood on the rocks in the desert sunshine and looked out over the calm waters that glistened like diamonds in the sunshine, I listened to them gently lap upon the shore and it was as if the waters were lightly ringing; and I looked out on the water and toward the rest of my life and I felt an overwhelming sense of peace.

There are those today who will look at this story and say that the men wanted Jesus to heal Peter's mother-in-law so that she could get up and serve them, the men, food. But I think you and I know better than that. Jesus, after all, was not a self-serving person.

The way I look at it, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law with an overwhelming sense of peace so that she could live in to the rest of her life and do what she felt called to do, which was to serve. That's the whole point: that as the result of being healed, she serves.

What does it mean to be healed?

I think we really need to make a distinction here between being healed and being cured. And I submit to you that many people in The Gospel were cured because they were healed, but that one doesn't necessarily lead to the other.

Whenever I do healing prayers for people I say the following words:

I lay my hands upon you, beseeching our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to descend upon you with the healing power of his love, giving you strength and courage to live into God's will for you—today, tomorrow, and all the days of your life.

That may mean being cured, and it may not.

The day before he died I went to give Kilani Ventura Holy Communion and then I anointed him with unction oil. And I used the very words that I just shared with you.

*I lay my hands upon you, beseeching our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to descend upon you with the **healing** power of his love.*

Epiphany 5 – February 4, 2018, cont'd

And after I put the wine-soaked host in Kilani's mouth and made the sign of the cross with oil on his forehead and his hands and his feet, he was calm. He was calm, because (I believe) he felt an overwhelming sense of peace and he was able to live into what God was calling him to do—to be with God and to be with God fully and completely. We all know that Kilani wasn't cured, but I believe down to my core that he was healed.

And like Peter's mother-in-law, in response to his healing, Kilani serves. He serves beyond the earthly plane because the memory of him infuses us with love and helps us to move forward as good Christians—to go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

You know, I'm here as your priest for one simple reason. I'm here because the Episcopal Church healed me when I was 30 years old. When God beckoned me through the doors of the church, not only did the Episcopal Church welcome me, the Episcopal Church wanted me. For the first time in my life, I got to be part of a group that wanted me. And you wanted me not in spite of who I was, but because of who I was. And I was good enough. And when I walked through the doors of the church, I was healed.

And to serve out of gratitude for my healing brings me great joy, and the knowledge that I was healed and continue to be healed gives me the wherewithal to face the trials and tribulations as well as to embrace the joys and triumphs of my life, and to offer them up to God and to the glory of God.

Today is the 12th anniversary of my priestly ordination. And as I reflect on my service as a priest, I guess the thing that I really want to say to you is that I'm nothing special. I'm not any better or any worse than anyone else who walks through these cathedral church doors. Ordination, to me, is a lateral move in the pool of ministry that is the church; and in this case, I'm called to a ministry that is sacramental.

We are all called to ministry. We are all called by God. And we are all healed—every time we come forward for the bread and the wine, we are all healed. And like Peter's mother-in-law, we are all called to take that gift of peace that she got on the beautiful shores of the Sea of Galilee; we're called to take that gift of peace and use it to serve—to do what we can to make this world a better place, to help heal those who are wounded, and to give glory to God, which is exactly what Peter's mother-in-law does when she is healed. She doesn't make it about her; she makes it about God.

So if you come to the church and you read or say prayers at the lectern, know that you are called and know that you give glory to God. If you come to the church and you serve as an usher and pass out bulletins and point people in the right direction, know that you are called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come into the church and you carry the cross, or come in bearing the torches, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come into the church and sing in the choir or play the organ, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come into the church and give people communion from the chalice, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come into the church and help get things ready as a member of the Altar Guild, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come into the church, and help with the coffee hour, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you come in and help get things ready during the week, or man the phones, or help answer the door, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. If you serve on the Chapter or on a committee, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God. And if you do nothing else

Epiphany 5 – February 4, 2018, cont'd

but come in to the church to say your prayers and take communion and be part of the community with your presence, know that you were called by God, and know that you give glory to God.

I have on all these beautiful lei this morning and I'm honored to wear them. But if you walk away from this service and embrace that notion this morning that notion that you were called by God and that you give glory to God it will be the greatest ordination gift you could give to me; and it will be a gift that is pleasing and beautiful in God's sight.

And as you offer your gift, the gift that is you; listen to the words of Paul, and embrace them as your own by taking them into your heart and then out into the world. I close with the words of Paul:

I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

You are a blessing. You are called. Now go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Amen.